

For Immediate Release
August 9, 1999

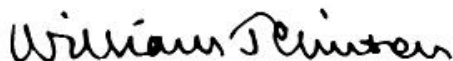
MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

SUBJECT: Interagency Group on Insular Areas

Issues relating to American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the United States Virgin Islands sometimes vary from those relating to the States. Such issues frequently cut across agency lines. Since the insular jurisdictions lack the representation that a State has in the Federal process, the Federal Government has a special responsibility to consider their issues.

Except for matters that are specifically within the responsibility of another department or agency, generally, the Secretary of the Interior has responsibility for the matters concerning these territorial jurisdictions. With the continued development of the insular areas and the extension of most Federal programs to them, the need to improve the coordination of Federal programs and policies as they relate to these jurisdictions has increased. I, therefore, direct as follows:

1. There shall be established the "Interagency Group on Insular Areas" (IGIA) to give guidance on policy concerning these insular jurisdictions. The IGIA membership shall consist of senior officials selected by the heads of executive departments, agencies, and offices that receive a request for representation from the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary). The Secretary and the Director of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs (Director) shall select the Co-Chairs of the IGIA.
2. The IGIA shall work on a continuing basis with the Secretary to identify issues concerning these insular jurisdictions and make recommendations to the President or other officials as appropriate concerning Federal Government policies and programs that raise those issues.
3. The IGIA shall consult with the Governors, Delegates to the U.S. House of Representatives, other elected representatives of the insular areas, and other Members of Congress as appropriate, on issues of concern. In this regard, the Co-Chairs shall schedule a meeting at least annually in Washington, D.C., with insular officials and shall schedule other meetings in response to requests of the officials.
4. Executive departments and agencies should coordinate significant decisions or activities relating to the insular areas with the IGIA. This shall not, however, limit the responsibility of departments and agencies to directly fulfill their responsibilities in the insular jurisdictions, including their responsibility to respond directly to the insular jurisdictions and their representatives.
5. The Secretary shall periodically, but no less than annually, report to the President through the Director on the progress made in addressing insular area issues.
6. The Secretary shall provide administrative support for the IGIA.



WILLIAM J. CLINTON